



MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 28, 2019

MESSAGE FROM THE BENTON COUNTY CORRECTIONS DEPARTMENT

Kennewick, WA – Effective October 23, 2019 at 12:01 AM, the Benton County Commissioners took control of the Benton County Jail and the Benton County Corrections Department from the Sheriff's Office. This decision was not made lightly and involved careful consideration of the benefits and risks of assuming responsibility of the Jail and the Corrections Department.

The Benton County Corrections Department would like to reassure the community that we intend to work as collaboratively as possible with the Sheriff's Office to facilitate a smooth transition of the operations of the Benton County Jail and the Corrections Department to minimize any potential impacts to employees, the public, or other law enforcement agencies.

The Corrections Department, despite no longer being the responsibility of the Sheriff's Office, will continue to have the same highly-trained and qualified officers and command staff managing and facilitating the day-to-day operations of the Jail. These individuals have proved, time and again, that they are leaders in their field and will continue to maintain that status throughout this transition.

Corrections Department staff will continue to work closely with local law enforcement agencies and other County departments to ensure that this change in leadership results in minimal, if any, disruption to the services and safety provided to the community.

We have requested that the Sheriff's Office maintain the limited commissions of Corrections Department officers, as granted by [RCW 10.93](#), to ensure that Corrections Officers are able to continue providing the exemplary services they have in the past, including the ability to execute warrants, make court arrests, and carry out other law enforcement functions. At this time, no response has been received from the Sheriff's Office on this request, but we have every intention of maintaining the commissioned status of our employees to ensure they can continue to execute these important duties. We would like to take this time to thank Kennewick Police Department for their service and assistance with these responsibilities while we work to reestablish the commissioned status of our officers.

In addition, we have been in contact with Spokane County Detention Services, Yakima County Department of Corrections, and Walla Walla County Corrections Department for their guidance and assistance on policies, procedures, and responsibilities post-separation from the Sheriff's Office. Each of these agencies have expressed their willingness to collaborate with us and share their experiences to ensure our department is successful as we move forward.

We have every intention of collaborating and cooperating with the Sheriff's Office and other local law enforcement agencies to get any concerns resolved in a timely manner. We would like to extend our deepest thanks to our community and our partners for their patience and understanding as we go through this transition. We are excited to build upon past successes of the Corrections Department and look forward to improving our services in the years ahead.

Sincerely,

Benton County Commissioners, Commander Scott Souza, & Captain Josh Shelton